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United States of America

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,  
  
Plaintiff,  
  
v.  
  
RICARDO BALLARDO QUINTERO, and  
JUAN SUAREZ, JR.,  
  
Defendants.

CASE NO. 1:21-CR-00257-JLT-SKO

STIPULATION REGARDING EXCLUDABLE  
TIME PERIODS UNDER SPEEDY TRIAL ACT;  
ORDER

CURRENT DATE: April 20, 2022  
TIME: 1:00 p.m.  
COURT: Hon. Sheila K. Oberto

This case is set for status conference on April 20, 2022. On May 13, 2020, this Court issued General Order 618, which suspended all jury trials in the Eastern District of California until further notice, and allows district judges to continue all criminal matters. Under General Order 618, a judge “may exercise his or her authority to continue matters, excluding time under the Speedy Trial Act with reference to the court’s prior General Order 611 issued on March 17, 2020 . . . with additional findings to support the exclusion in the Judge’s discretion.” General Order 618, ¶ 6 (E.D. Cal. May 13, 2020). In addition, any judge “may order case-by-case exceptions” to General Order 618’s provisions “at the discretion of that Judge or upon the request of counsel, after consultation with counsel and the Clerk of the Court to the extent such an order will impact court staff and operations.” General Order 618, ¶ 7 (E.D. Cal. May 13, 2020). This and other General Orders were entered to address public health concerns related to COVID-19 (for example, General Order 614—recently extended by General Order

1 640).

2 Although the General Orders address the district-wide health concern, the Supreme Court has  
 3 emphasized that the Speedy Trial Act’s end-of-justice provision “counteract[s] substantive  
 4 openendedness with procedural strictness,” “demand[ing] on-the-record findings” in a particular case.  
 5 *Zedner v. United States*, 547 U.S. 489, 509 (2006). “[W]ithout on-the-record findings, there can be no  
 6 exclusion under” § 3161(h)(7)(A). *Id.* at 507. Moreover, any such failure cannot be harmless. *Id.* at  
 7 509; *see also United States v. Ramirez-Cortez*, 213 F.3d 1149, 1153 (9th Cir. 2000) (explaining that a  
 8 judge ordering an ends-of-justice continuance must set forth explicit findings on the record “either orally  
 9 or in writing”).

10 Based on the plain text of the Speedy Trial Act—which *Zedner* emphasizes as both mandatory  
 11 and inexcusable—General Orders 611, 612, 617, and 618 require specific supplementation. Ends-of-  
 12 justice continuances are excludable only if “the judge granted such continuance on the basis of his  
 13 findings that the ends of justice served by taking such action outweigh the best interest of the public and  
 14 the defendant in a speedy trial.” 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7)(A). Moreover, no such period is excludable  
 15 unless “the court sets forth, in the record of the case, either orally or in writing, its reason or finding that  
 16 the ends of justice served by the granting of such continuance outweigh the best interests of the public  
 17 and the defendant in a speedy trial.” *Id.*

18 The General Orders exclude delay in the “ends of justice.” 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7) (Local Code  
 19 T4). Although the Speedy Trial Act does not directly address continuances stemming from pandemics,  
 20 natural disasters, or other emergencies, this Court has discretion to order a continuance in such  
 21 circumstances. For example, the Ninth Circuit affirmed a two-week ends-of-justice continuance  
 22 following Mt. St. Helens’ eruption. *Furlow v. United States*, 644 F.2d 764 (9th Cir. 1981). The court  
 23 recognized that the eruption made it impossible for the trial to proceed. *Id.* at 767-68; *see also United*  
 24 *States v. Correa*, 182 F. Supp. 326, 329 (S.D.N.Y. 2001) (citing *Furlow* to exclude time following the  
 25 September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the resultant public emergency). The coronavirus is posing a  
 26 similar, albeit more enduring, barrier to the prompt proceedings mandated by the statutory rules.

27 In light of the societal context created by the foregoing, this Court should consider the following  
 28 case-specific facts in finding excludable delay appropriate in this particular case under the ends-of-

justice exception, § 3161(h)(7) (Local Code T4).<sup>1</sup> If continued, this Court should designate a new date for the status conference. *United States v. Lewis*, 611 F.3d 1172, 1176 (9th Cir. 2010) (noting any pretrial continuance must be “specifically limited in time”).

#### STIPULATION

Plaintiff United States of America, by and through its counsel of record, and RICARDO BALLARDO QUINTERO, and JUAN SUAREZ, JR., by and through defendants’ counsel of record, Robert Lee Forkner and Preciliano Martinez, respectively, hereby stipulate as follows:

1. By previous order, this matter was set for status on April 20, 2022.
2. By this stipulation, defendant now moves to continue the status conference until September 21, 2022, and to exclude time between April 20, 2022, and September 21, 2022, under Local Code T4.
3. While the parties anticipate that the case may resolve without a trial, this is not yet a certainty. If defendants ultimately do not enter a guilty plea and decide to proceed to trial, the parties agree and stipulate, and request that the Court find the following:
  - a) The government asserts the discovery associated with this case includes reports, photographs, and recordings; discovery has been provided to defense counsel. The government is aware of its ongoing discovery obligations.
  - b) The government is amendable to providing a plea offer should the defendants request one.
  - c) Counsel for defendants desire additional time to consult with their clients, to review the current charges, to conduct investigation and research related to the charges, to review and/or copy discovery for this matter, to discuss potential resolutions with their clients, to prepare pretrial motions, and to otherwise prepare for trial.
  - d) Counsel for defendants believe that failure to grant the above-requested continuance would deny them the reasonable time necessary for effective preparation, taking into account the exercise of due diligence.

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<sup>1</sup> The parties note that General Order 612 acknowledges that a district judge may make “additional findings to support the exclusion” at the judge’s discretion. General Order 612, ¶ 5 (E.D. Cal. March 18, 2020).

1 e) The government does not object to the continuance.

2 f) Based on the above-stated findings, the ends of justice served by continuing the  
3 case as requested outweigh the interest of the public and the defendants in a trial within the  
4 original date prescribed by the Speedy Trial Act.

5 g) For the purpose of computing time under the Speedy Trial Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3161,  
6 et seq., within which trial must commence, the time period of April 20, 2022 to September 21,  
7 2022, inclusive, is deemed excludable pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7)(A), B(iv) [Local Code  
8 T4], because it results from a continuance granted by the Court at defendants' request on the  
9 basis of the Court's finding that the ends of justice served by taking such action outweigh the  
10 best interest of the public and the defendant in a speedy trial.

11 4. Nothing in this stipulation and order shall preclude a finding that other provisions of the  
12 Speedy Trial Act dictate that additional time periods are excludable from the period within which a trial  
13 must commence.

14  
15 IT IS SO STIPULATED.

16  
17 Dated: April 12, 2022

PHILLIP A. TALBERT  
United States Attorney

18 /s/ JESSICA A. MASSEY  
19 JESSICA A. MASSEY  
Assistant United States Attorney

20  
21 Dated: April 12, 2022

/s/ ROBERT LEE FORKNER  
22 ROBERT LEE FORKNER  
Counsel for Defendant  
23 RICARDO BALLARDO  
QUINTERO

24 Dated: April 12, 2022

/s/ PRECILIANO MARTINEZ  
25 PRECILIANO MARTINEZ  
Counsel for Defendant  
26 JUAN SUAREZ JR.

**ORDER**

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATED: 4/13/2022

*Sheila K. Oberto*

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Hon. Sheila K. Oberto  
U.S. Magistrate Judge